

JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE AND BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING

February 13, 2013

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Meeting Date: February 13, 2013

Called to Order: 6:00 PM

Location: 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls MA

Finance Committee Members Present: John Hanold, Michael Naughton, Greg Garrison
Lynn Reynolds and Sharon Kennaugh.

Board of Selectmen Members: Christopher Boutwell and Mark Fairbrother. Pat Allen
was absent.

Others Present: Town Administrator Frank Abbondanzio, Town Accountant Carolyn
Olsen, Town Clerk Debra Bourbeau, Water Pollution Control Facility (WPCF)
Superintendent Bob Trombley, WPCF Operator John Little, and DPW Superintendent
Tom Bergeron.

Reserve Fund Transfer Requests

There are now two special elections scheduled. The special primary election will be April
30th and the state election will be June 25th. The Town Clerk has requested a transfer of
\$8,000 to pay for additional hours for election workers for the upcoming special election.

Finance Committee Moved:

To transfer \$8,000 from the Reserve Fund to the Town Clerk's Part-
Time/Temporary Wages line item.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

The Town Clerk has requested a transfer of \$580 to pay for additional custodial expenses
for the upcoming special elections.

Finance Committee Moved:

To transfer \$580 from the Reserve Fund to the Town Clerk's Custodial Services
line item.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Water Pollution Control Facility

- While lower than Fiscal Year 2012 expenditures, Fiscal Year 2013 Overtime expenses are up in spite of fuller staffing because 90% of the overtime is for response to alarms, which is not impacted by the number of staff.
- Part time wages are connected with the drop in employment services but the net change is an increase because the part time wages budget includes work throughout the year outside of what would have been funded through employment services.
- Process changes over the last year or two have affected spending patterns. The changes are not complete but are ongoing in efforts to reduce the costs of operation through experimentation. Most of the changes made have reduced the costs, but some have increased costs in the short term.

- There may still be changes in the Fiscal Year 2014 budget request depending on the next two months of electric bills. At this point there will likely be a reduction.
- When septage is received from other towns, the revenue shows as Septage Revenue, which is part of Sewer User Fees. The plant has always taken septage from other towns but has more recently been taking thickened sludge from Greenfield. Mr. Trombley is anticipating Fiscal Year 2013 revenues of \$40,000-\$50,000 from the thickened sludge processing.
- Mr. Abbondanzio said that the Capital Improvements Committee has discussed how to fund capital costs coming up in a few years. One of their ideas is to put money from sewer user fees into a stabilization fund for the capital costs down the road without having as much of an impact on the sewer rates. Part of the funding would be generated by modest increases in the sewer rates. Mr. Trombley provided some history of trying to pre-fund things that goes back to when the enterprise fund was created. The first idea was to have a depreciation fund, which was opposed by some of the industries so the town did not pursue this. Mr. Trombley is also concerned that some of the new debt service doesn't get paid off until 2048.
- The plant is also trying to do a lot of small projects on their own to avoid incurring debt costs.
- There are several factors involved in the increased request for Solid Waste Disposal. Part of the increase results from processing the thickened sludge from Greenfield. Another factor is that the cost is based on both weight and the number of loads. The bid was based on certain numbers for both, and the company imposes a surcharge if the weights fall too low (because part of their revenue depends on weight related tipping fees). The de-watering reduces the weight per load which sometimes results in increased costs per load. Finally, Fiscal Year 2012 was first full fiscal year with the new press, so they could only estimate for the cost for Fiscal Year 2013. The Fiscal Year 2014 estimate has more data behind it. On a final note, while processing Septage from other towns and the thickened sludge from Greenfield increases the cost, it also generates additional revenues.
- Mr. Hanold noted that the WPCF staff are some of the most innovative and creative people around.
- The pump stations to be built in the future will be above ground, which will eliminate the need for a second person that is currently required for entering the confined spaces of the current pump stations.
- The Turners Falls Fire District overhead is what we pay the district for water meter readings.
- Mr. Trombley also submitted a supplemental request for \$30,000 to pay for additional pay increases for 3 of his operators. His concern is that the current pay scale will not allow him to retain trained operators.
- The plant is staffed at 7 but Mr. Trombley has had staffing evaluated by a professional agency and the results were that a facility of this size and complexity should have at least 10 staff.

DPW

- The budgeted increase for salt, sand and plow items is the result of ordering a standard tonnage with estimated rate increases.
- Mr. Bergeron provided a handout showing the detail of the budget for solid waste removal. Allied Waste has a multi-year contract with an annual escalator. Other expenses include tipping fees. The request for Fiscal Year 2014 may look high compared to prior years because prior year requests were reduced.
- Mr. Boutwell asked about adding a compactor for paper at the transfer station. A compactor would allow us to triple the volume and weight of a container of recycled paper. The Franklin County Solid Waste Management District offered grants last year for compactors, but the cost for the box and set up would be paid by the town. We did not get a grant last year but will be reapplying.
- A Heavy Equipment Operator may be retiring in Fiscal Year 2014, so sick leave and vacation buybacks have been budgeted. Since this may not occur, wages have been budgeted for the incumbent for the entire year. If the employee does retire, there will most likely be an internal promotion and a new Truck Driver/Laborer will be hired at the bottom step.
- In Construction and Maintenance, the DPW is requesting an increase of over 10% in the Expense section. Some of the expenditures through December 31, 2012 are running high (Other Professional/Technical), and some are running low (Repair & Maintenance). The Other Professional/Technical includes line painting, which runs just under \$20,000 and is done in late summer which is why that year-to-date expenditure looks high. There were also significant cost for cleaning out under South Street Bridge and cost overruns on the water line by the Montague Center School.
- The increasing age of buildings is driving higher spending for Public Buildings Repair and Maintenance.
- Fuel and other utility costs are rising from year to year.

Reserve Fund Transfer Requests

The Board of Assessors has requested a transfer of \$3,000 to pay for the unused vacation time of a retiring employee.

Finance Committee Moved:

To transfer \$3,000 from the Reserve Fund to the Assessor's Vacation Buyback line item.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

The Board of Assessors has requested a transfer of \$2,500 to pay for the unused sick time of a retiring employee.

Finance Committee Moved:

To transfer \$2,500 from the Reserve Fund to the Assessor's Sick Leave Buyback line item.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

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The Town Accountant has requested a transfer of \$1,400 to pay for additional hours for an employee to do payroll and bills in the Accountant's absence.

Finance Committee Moved:

To transfer \$1,400 from the Reserve Fund to the Town Accountant's Part-Time Wages line item.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Stipends

Both the Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen previously agreed to raise the annual Stipends for the Boards of Assessors, Health and Selectmen to \$1,500. Both groups have also previously agreed to not change the stipend amounts for the Computer Administrator, Animal Inspector and Barn Inspector as those were adjusted for Fiscal Year 2013.

The remaining stipends to discuss are for the Moderator, Clerk for the Board of Registrars (Town Clerk), Tree Warden, Board of Registrars, Emergency Management Director, Burial Agent, Forest Warden and part-time Inspectors for the Building Inspector.

Moderator –Mr. Hanold proposed \$340. Mr. Boutwell suggested \$350. Mr. Naughton is not in favor of any increases at this time, but would prefer \$340. The Finance Committee settled on \$340.

The Tree Warden requested an increase from \$1,267 to \$1,460. Mr. Hanold proposed \$1,368.75 annually, which works out to \$3.75 per day. This is an 8% increase. There was no dissent.

The Forest Warden requested a 3 % increase from \$1,584 to \$1,631. There was agreement.

There was no request for an increase for the Burial Agent, and none was suggested.

There was no request for an increase for the Emergency Management Director, and none was suggested.

Regarding the part time inspectors for the Building Inspector's Department, Mr. Hanold suggested \$28 per inspection. The Building Inspector did not respond to the request for input. Mr. Naughton prefers to leave it as is. There was no support for the increase.

The Town Clerk requested an increase for both the Board of Registrars and the clerk to the Board of Registrars. Ms. Bourbeau is concerned about her ability to retain registrars. Mr. Hanold would recommend increases to \$350 and \$795. Ms. Reynolds offered \$500 for the registrars and approves the \$795 for the clerk. Mr. Naughton would make the

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clerk an even \$800. There was agreement on \$500 for the registrars and \$800 for the clerk.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend the following stipend amounts for Fiscal Year 2014:

Moderator	340
Board of Registrars/Town Clerk	800
Tree Warden	1,368.75
Board of Registrars (3)	500
Emergency Management	5,490
Burial Agent	670
Animal Inspector	1,500
Barn Inspector	500
Computer Administrator	2,000
Forest Warden	1,631

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Topics not Anticipated – Agenda for next week

- Capital Improvements Committee
- Review and make recommendations on all Special Town Meeting articles
- Discuss the following budgets:
 - 122 Selectmen
 - 151 Legal
 - 190 Public Building Utilities
 - 543 Veterans
 - 840 Intergovernmental
 - 946 General Insurance
 - Workers Compensation for both Town and WPCF
- Board of Selectmen recommendations for stipends

Meeting Adjourned at 8:25 PM

List of Documents and Exhibits –

- Minutes of January 30, 2013
- Detail of expenditures from DPW discretionary article for Fiscal Year 2013
- Detail of Solid Waste budget estimate
- Transfer Requests
- Responses to Stipend Inquiry

Next Meetings

- February 20, 2013 see detail above
- March 6, 2013 GMRSD